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Abuse victims give congressman an earful

Rep. Barrett pledges support for organization

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For three Upstate women, putting a face to the victims of domestic violence meant telling their stories out loud.

For Ruth (not her real name), it meant telling U. S. Rep. Gresham Barrett, R-S.C., how a classmate at Clemson University had raped her after a date.

For Diana, it meant telling the congressman how she had been beaten, raped and left for dead in her Walhalla home, and how she had feared for her life every time the rapist was freed from jail.

For Patricia, it meant recounting her feelings after finding out her then husband had repeatedly molested her daughter from ages 8 to 16. It meant telling in agonizing detail how lost she was — left by her friends, lost in the legal system, overwhelmed by the guilt that something like this could happen in her own home, as she slept in her bed.

For Rep. Barrett, it was a reminder of how important it is to fund the Victims of Crime Act.

The Victims of Crime Act and Violence Against Women Act both helped to pay bills at the Foothills Alliance, an organization dedicated to helping women and children cope with the aftermath of sexual assault of abuse. Rep. Barrett recently voted to increase federal funding of both acts.

"Because of your vote they were able to get help," said Fay Brown, executive director of the center.

After the stories were told, with tears in his eyes, Rep. Barrett said he would help the center however he could.

"That's pretty powerful. I've got a daughter at Clemson. I've got a wife," he said. "Too many times people in my position don't see people, they see dollars and figures. This helps put a face to those numbers."

Calling the work the counselors at the center did a "calling," Rep. Barrett praised the group for doing "the Lord's work."

"I can take a bunch of Democrats calling me a name on a regular basis, but I couldn't do what you do," he said.



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